

A FRIENDLY ADMONITION TO YOUTH  
TO AVOID BAD COMPANY.

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED

At St. JOHN'S CHAPEL,  
in SLEIGHTS,

On SUNDAY, May 2, 1784.

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BY THE

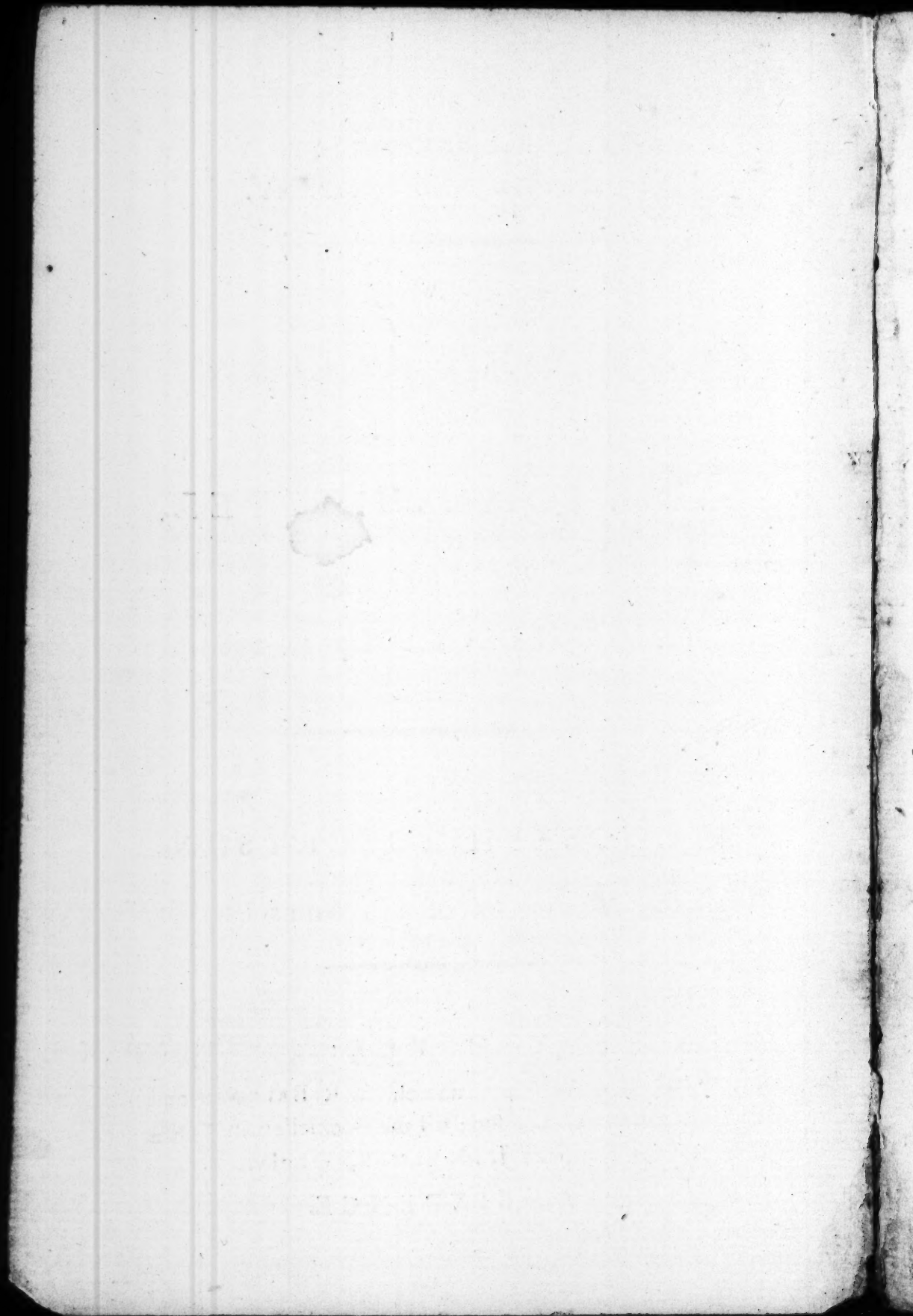
Rev. JOSEPH ROBERTSON,  
MINISTER of SLEIGHTS.

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T O

Mrs. B O W E R.

MADAM,

**T**HE following Discourse (published with a sincere intention to do good) is humbly Inscribed to You, as a small Testimony of Respect for your excellent Character; and in Gratitude for the many kind and unsolicited Favours you have been pleased to confer upon,

MADAM,

Your most obliged

and obedient Servant,

J. ROBERTSON.



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## S E R M O N, &c.

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P R O V E R B S i. 10.

MY SON, IF SINNERS ENTICE THEE,  
CONSENT THOU NOT.

**M**Y beloved young friends! When the allurements and temptations of an evil world, in various kinds, present themselves to you, and attract your attention; when numbers of wicked men, by licentious principles and vicious practices, are endeavouring to ensnare your virtue and corrupt your morals; how happy should I think myself, if any thing, which shall now be offered, might be serviceable; either to restore those of you, who have imprudently turned aside from the path of virtue; or to guard the unexperienced and inconsiderate,



fiderate, who may be in danger, from the dire contagion of iniquity.

Too apt, alas ! are we all to be led into guilt, by our own corrupt hearts, amidst the best instructions and examples. Human nature is frail ; and the world has a variety of entertainments to amuse our passions, and incite our appetites, in every period and station of life. How forcibly then will temptations invade you, my young friends, when you see your dissolute companions (whom you have unhappily made choice of) obeying the impulse of every wicked inclination ; when you hear them speaking warmly in favour of vice ; and, by specious arguments, persuading you to join in the practice.

You may, perhaps, imagine, that there is little danger of your innocence and integrity being violated ; and that no temptation whatever can make you transgress the laws of virtue, or draw you into  
wicked

wicked and immoral practices, which, probably, you have often been cautioned against, by the good instructions of your parents and friends. By this imagination, thousands have been deluded. Remember, my brethren, there is a strong force in example. When you see your favourite companions neglecting, perhaps deriding, every thing serious; and freely indulging every sensual appetite; it is likely, that you will want resolution to oppose them. At first, you will be shocked at their behaviour, and remain only silent spectators. But you cannot long withstand the baneful influence of vicious acquaintance: Your attachment to their persons will naturally lead you to approve their actions; and to imitate their vices.

True it is, that it requires some time to conquer the modesty of nature. You will blush at the very thought of first deviating from the path of virtue. But, seduced by the “craftiness of them, who lie  
in

in wait to deceive," (and oh! what artifice and disguise are practised in order to deceive) and betrayed by the depravity of the heart, and inexperience of youth, you will be tempted to make some advances towards the path of folly. The good impressions of education will begin gradually to wear off; and sin become, every day, by artful palliations, more familiar, and less terrible. Your judgment will begin to submit to inclination.—With trembling steps, you will now venture forward; will proceed from one degree of wickedness to another; and will thereby be led on, insensibly led on, through passion and persuasion; till at last, you arrive at the chambers of—Death.

Perhaps, amidst the hurry and tumult of the passions, the voice of friendly admonition may not be always properly attended to; yet, let me now request your most earnest attention, my young friends, while I briefly point out the evils you  
incur



incur by going in the way of sinners.—  
 Let me remind you, that, by giving up  
 yourselves to sensuality, you efface all  
 serious impressions from your mind. You  
 reflect disgrace and scandal on your reli-  
 gion. You forfeit the favour of your Al-  
 mighty Maker. You ruin your fortune,  
 your health, your reputation: You make  
 yourselves pests to society. You give of-  
 fence to virtuous and good men; and be-  
 come stumbling-blocks to the weak and  
 the unwary.—What inexpressible anguish  
 also must you occasion your unhappy pa-  
 rents, to see you thus swerving from the  
 right way: To see you disgracing them  
 by your useless and immoral lives: To see  
 you thus repaying, basely repaying, all  
 their tenderness, all their affectionate  
 hopes, their anxious thoughts, their alarm-  
 ing fears, their painful concern for your  
 welfare. Ungrateful creatures! Is this a  
 proper return to make them; to be a sword  
 in their bowels, and to pierce them through  
 with many sorrows? Alas! they promised  
 themselves

themselves other things, “when you hung about them with your infant arms; when you answered their fond smiles, and lisped out the first broken accents of endearment.”

It is probable that, for some time after, you repaid all their solicitude and expence by acts of filial piety and love; by your constant attendance upon public ordinances; by the performance of virtuous and laudable actions; and by pursuing the pleasing paths of prudence and integrity. Blessed Lord! how did their hearts then burn within them, and swell with emotions of gratitude to thee, and their eyes overflow with tears of joy, when they beheld their child—a child of virtue and of God.

But now, alas! how are their flattering hopes disappointed! They see the good instructions bestowed upon you, were bestowed in vain. They see their good examples

amples despised and ridiculed; their authority affronted; their love slighted. They see your religious principles shaken, by the scoffs of the prophane; and your religious practice corrupted, by the bewitching charms of false pleasure. They see—distressing sight! they see you plunge deep into intemperance; destroying even your faculties to forget your Maker.

Here then is the completion of your wretchedness! Sunk into the depth of wickedness, and surrounded by a train of attendant miseries;—your fortune wasted; your health destroyed; your friends offended; your God dishonoured;—what course will you now take? To whom will you now fly?—If you look back; nothing but shame and guilt: If forward; all, all is woe unutterable.

You, my brethren, who have thus fallen victims to the snares of temptation, and unfortunately lost the best season of  
devoting

devoting yourselves to God; with the most ardent affection for your welfare, I exhort, in the name of our common Lord and Master, to betake yourselves to immediate repentance, and a consequent reformation of manners. Return—return from the error of your ways. Tread back, in haste, the fatal steps you have taken. Abandon those ensnaring companions, those votaries of vice; and say, resolutely say, to them, “depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”—Associate, therefore, in future, with virtuous and good men, and they will tell you what you must do to be saved from the wrath to come. Reflect on your past misconduct; and defer not a moment to secure your peace with God. Be careful to live sober, righteous, and godly lives. Consecrate the remainder of them to him, who gave them; to him, who redeemed them. With sincerity of heart, implore the mercy, it may be, you have long despised; and beg for that grace, which often, perhaps, you have derided. Open  
your



your eyes, and see the danger of your condition. Nothing to keep you from present ruin, but the slender thread of life upon which you hang ; which a thousand diseases, and ten thousand accidents may cut off. With trembling eagerness then, apply yourselves to the great work of your salvation. Remember ! the time allotted for your conversion is very short. Apply it now, while you may. Repent—repent—and be happy.

As for you, my young friends, who are yet unpolluted by the vices of the world—free from bad impressions, and capable of the best—I beseech you, never to suffer yourselves to be drawn from the fair and blessed paths of religion and virtue, by any temptations of evil, by any persuasions of the wicked. “ If sinners, then, entice you, consent not ; walk not in the way with them ; refrain your feet from their paths ; neither desire to be with them, lest ye learn their ways, and get a snare to your souls.



souls. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men ; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."—Never trust yourselves in the way of that infection, by which so many have been undone. If you value your present peace and future happiness, fly from those robbers of your innocence ; your safety is in flight. It may indeed require resolution ; but, remember, it will greatly reward it. You must, therefore, exert your fortitude, and resolve not to go to the assembly of sinners. If they invite you, tell them your reason, your conscience, your health, your peace, dictate and demand quite contrary things. Tell them plainly and seriously, that you have a prior engagement—an engagement of infinitely greater importance—*the salvation of your souls*.—Who knows, what a remarkable blessing may attend your noble resolutions and admonitions. Perhaps, they may be heard with greater attention, and go further to reclaim the vicious, than  
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the most animated discourse from the pulpit.

Proceed, then, with courage, ye virtuous and amiable young men, to stem the torrent of impetuous passions. Endeavour to convince all, with whom you may be connected, of the fatal consequences of going in the path of folly and of sin; and, in the most earnest and affectionate manner, dissuade them from it. Entreat them to go with you in the way that leadeth to life; and tell them, it is the way of pleasantness, it is the path of peace.—By exerting yourselves in these benevolent services, you will, at least, put to silence the tongue of the prophane. By hearing you recommend religion, and seeing you maintain a lively sense of it, in a constant regard to the all-seeing eye of your gracious God, it must, in time, affect them; and, as the Apostle says, “minister grace unto the hearers.” It must make them stand in awe of your instructions, and may be the happy

happy means of their conversion and salvation.

Think not, my beloved, that your being, and persuading others to be, religious, will interrupt your attention to necessary business; to improving your possessions; or enjoying every pleasure or diversion, consistent with rational beings. Think not, that I would deny to youth the pleasing gratifications of that age; or discourage you from that social and chearful intercourse, which is the highest cordial of life. Undoubtedly chearfulness is as innocent, as it is amiable; it both gives delight, and doth good: "A merry heart, says Solomon, doth good like a medicine."— True religion delights not in a rigid disposition; in a grave, gloomy countenance; or an entire separation from the world and its enjoyments. No: Its precepts are, "rejoice; and again I say, rejoice." If our hearts condemn us not, and we have

a just confidence towards God, certainly we have cause to rejoice.

Instead, therefore, of dissuading you from joining in friendly society; or enjoying, under certain restrictions, the amusements and pleasures of life,—I only urge you to avoid, as much as possible, the society of the wicked; and to despise those pleasures, which are mean and visionary; those, which will spoil your innocence, wound your conscience, and offend your God.

May that Almighty Being, who delights in shewing mercy to those who early devote themselves to him; may he guard you, my young friends, from every snare and temptation dangerous to your innocence! May he enable you to withstand the examples and enticements of wicked men, and to triumph over all “youthful lusts and passions, which war against the soul!”—And may he, by his blessed spirit, bring



( 18 )

bring us *all*, in this our day, to know  
and practise the things which belong to  
our eternal peace,—that we may be pre-  
sented faultless in the great day of the  
Lord. *Amen.*

THE END.



